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IN VACATION.

COUSIN SALLIE DILLARD.—Scene: A court of justice in South Carolina.

A beardless disciple of Themis arises and thus addresses the court: “May it please your worship and you, gentlemen of the jury, since it has been my fortune (good or bad I will not say) to exercise myself in legal disquisition, it has never befallen me to be obliged to prosecute so direfully marked an assault. A more wilful, violent and dangerous battery, and, finally, a more diabolical breach of the peace, has seldom happened in a civilized country, and I dare say it has seldom been your duty to pass upon one so shocking to benevolent feelings as this which took place over at Captain Rice’s, in this county; but you will hear from the witnesses.”

The witnesses being sworn, two or three were examined and deposed. One said that he heard the noise, but did not see the fight; another, that he saw the row, but did not know who struck first, and another that he was very drunk and couldn’t see much about the scrimmage.

Lawyer Chops: I am sorry, gentlemen, to have occupied your time with the stupidity of the witnesses examined. It arises, gentlemen, altogether from a misapprehension on my part. Had I known, as I do now that I had a witness who was acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and was able to make himself clearly understood to the court and jury, I should not have trespassed so long on your patience. Come forward, Mr. Harris, and be sworn.

So forward comes the witness, a fat, chuffy old man, a “leettle” corned, and took his oath with an air.

Chops: Harris, we wish you to tell about the riot that happened the other day at Captain Rice’s, and as a good deal of time has already been wasted in circumlocution, we wish you to be compendious, at the same time as explicit as possible.

Harris: Adzackly (giving the lawyer a knowing wink, at the same time clearing his throat). Cap’n Rice he gin a treat, and Cousin Sally Dillard she came over to our house and axed me if my wife she mout’n go. I told Cousin Sally Dillard that my wife was poorly, being as how she had a touch of the rheumatics in her hip, and the big swamp was up in the road, there having been a great deal of rain lately, but howsoever, as it was she, Cousin Sally Dillard, my wife mout go. Well, Cousin Sally Dillard then asked me if Mose he mout’n go! I told Cousin Sally Dillard that he was the foreman of the crap, and the crap was smartly in the grass; but howsoever, as it was she, Cousin Sally Dillard, Mose mout go.

Chops: In the name of common sense, Mr. Harris, what do you mean by this rigamarole?

Witness: Captain Rice he gin a treat and Cousin Sally Dillard she come over to my house and asked me if my wife she mout’n go? and I told Cousin Sally Dillard—

Chops: Stop, sir, if you please; we don’t want to hear about your Cousin Sally Dillard or your wife; tell us about the fight at Rice’s.

Witness: Well, I will, sir, if you will let me.

Chops: Well, sir, go on.

Witness: Well, sir, Captain Rice, he gin a treat, and Cousin Sally Dillard she come over to my house and asked me if my wife she mout'n go.

Chops: Here it is again. Witness, please to stop.

Witness: Well, sir, what do you want?

Chops: We want to know about the fight, and you must not proceed with this impertinent story. Do you know anything about the matter before the court?

Witness: To be sure I do.

Chops: Well, go on, then, and tell it and nothing else.

Witness: Well, Captain Rice, he gin a treat—

Chops: This is intolerable. May it please the court, I move that the witness be committed for a contempt. He seems to be trifling with the court.

Court: Witness, you are before a court of justice, and unless you behave yourself in a more becoming manner you will be sent to jail; so begin and tell me what you know about the fight at Rice's.

Witness: Well, gentlemen, Captain Rice he gin a treat, and Cousin Sally Dillard—

Court (after deliberating): Mr. Attorney, the court is of the opinion that we may save time by letting the witness go on in his own way. Proceed, Mr. Harris, with your story, but stick to the point.

Witness: Yes, gentlemen. Well, Captain Rice he gin a treat, and Cousin Sally Dillard come over to our house and axed me if my wife she mout'n go. I told Cousin Sally Dillard that my wife she was poorly, being as how she had the rheumatics in her hips, and the big swamp was up; howsoever, as it was she, Cousin Sally Dillard, my wife she mout go. Well, Cousin Sally Dillard then axed me if Mose he mout'n go. I told Cousin Sally Dillard as how Mose he was foreman of the crap, and the crap was smartly in the grass; but, howsoever, as it was she, Cousin Sally Dillard, Mose mout go. So they goes on together, Mose, my wife and Cousin Sally Dillard, and they come to the big swamp and it was up, as I was telling you; but being as how there was a log across the big swamp, Cousin Sally Dillard and Mose, like genteel folks, they walked the log, but my wife, like a darn fool, hoisted her coats and waded through.

Chops: Heaven and earth, this is too bad; but go on.

Witness: Well, that's all I know about the fight.